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A

SERMON,

DELIVERED ON THE 9th OF *MAY*, 1798.

BEING THE DAY OF A

NATIONAL FAST,

RECOMMENDED BY THE

President of the United States,

By JOHN THORNTON KIRKLAND,

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1798.



A

FAST SERMON.

ISAIAH xxvi. 9.

*WHEN THY JUDGMENTS ARE IN THE EARTH, THE INHABITANTS
OF THE WORLD WILL LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

WHEN nations or individuals are brought into difficulty and danger, it is to be expected that they will give a serious attention to their situation and their duty. If distress and fear prove ineffectual to lead them into right views and conduct, there is great reason to consider their reformation hopeless. To no purpose will any be addressed by the soft voice of mercy, who remain deaf to the stern calls of judgment. The sacred Scriptures seem to represent adversity as the last method of awakening the secure and reclaiming the wicked, which the divine plan of a moral government allows to be used with mankind.

THAT we may comply with the design of the Supreme Disposer in the infliction of evils, we have been exhorted by our national Head to assemble this day, and with one heart and voice to offer that tribute of acknowledgment and supplication to Almighty God, which is at all times a duty, and especially "in seasons of difficulty and danger; when existing or threatening calamities, the just judgments of God against prevalent iniquity, are a loud call to repentance and reformation." It will comport with the objects of this solemnity, and the sense of the text.

I. To

I. To show in what consists the right improvement of publick evils and dangers, and

II. To apply the subject to the present circumstances of the world ; and especially of our country.

I. LET us show in what consists the right improvement of publick evils and dangers.

1. EXISTING and threatened evils in our own situation or in that of mankind in general, ought to be viewed in connection with the wise and benevolent Providence of God. We do not live in a fatherless, unprotected world. " Verily there is a God, who judgeth in the earth. He preserveth man and beast, and he doeth his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it ? Every good gift cometh down from above." The doctrine of a Providence is inferred from the perfections of the Creator and the frame and events of the world ; and is clearly taught in revelation. That the Author of the world is able to govern it is no less evident than that he exists ; for every thing possible must come within the reach of that power, which produced this stupendous system ; and he must know all the parts, tendencies, and operations of his own work. That he is willing to govern it, we must deduce from his wisdom and goodness ; which oblige us to believe that he made the world for an end, and that this end is the greatest possible good. Without the unremitting influence of the Deity, matter could have no motion ; mind no energy ; and the natural and moral world must drop into nothing. Without a superior control, parts so various, elements so discordant, tendencies so opposite, as exist in nature would never conspire to an end. When we survey the structure and events of the world, in innumerable instances, their parts and uses lie beyond our comprehension. But this circumstance should have no effect to shake our belief in a Providence, since it necessarily arises from the perfection of the Creator and his work. Could he
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be infinite, and yet be comprehensible by finite capacities ? Could his plan be adapted to the immeasurable whole, and yet be understood by the tenants of a little spot, whose keenest researches give them but a short insight into themselves and their narrow habitation, and who know nothing of the myriads of distant worlds ? But although, from our confined situation and limited powers, and from the progressive state in which all things appear, being destined to reach a point of perfection, still remote, we are unable to judge of the whole scheme ; yet we see enough of wise and beneficent design and tendency in the subordinate parts, to establish our belief and trust in a divine, perfect, and benevolent superintendence. The parts are adapted to each other, and the prevailing tendency of every arrangement, which we understand, is to good. All living creatures are qualified for a kind and degree of enjoyment, suited to their natures and the stations they occupy in the order of being. Evil appears in many instances to be productive of good ; virtue to be generally, though not invariably connected with present happiness ; vice, with present misery. The evidence of the government of God, obtained by reason and observation, is elucidated and confirmed by revelation. From the history it contains of his treatment of particular nations, serving as a specimen of his general administration, from its uniform declarations, from the affecting pledge of the divine benignity exhibited in the scheme of redemption by Jesus Christ, we may gain an unshaken conviction of the wisdom and rectitude of the Author of the world ; a firm and joyful belief that all events in the whole extent of his dominions are under his direction ; that the greatest good is designed and effected by the present order of things ; and that no injustice is done to a single member of his family. Let us acknowledge then, that all evils, whether arising from mechanical causes or from human passions are the *judgments of God* ; events permitted or ordered by him
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to answer great and benevolent purposes ; and not think *that* to be fate, which is divine determination, *that* to be chance, which is divine contrivance. Are we perplexed to reconcile the government of God with the freedom of man ? We may expect perplexity and disappointment in attempting to solve questions on subjects beyond the reach of our faculties. Let us not doubt or deny these truths, because unable to explain the manner of their existence. Sufficient is it for our satisfaction in these points, that we are assured by God himself in the bright revelation of his will, that whilst dependent, we are free ; whilst we can chuse and refuse, God controls all events and even the thoughts and actions of men ; whilst our sins deserve punishment, they are made to accomplish the plan of Providence. Hence,

2. To make this divine Providence in the evils suffered or feared, the object of submission and confidence, is no less a duty, than to acknowledge it. Let not troubles and dangers excite discontent, or despair. Imperfect and disorderly as the system may appear in its detached parts and events, we know it to be a regular and perfect whole. No wrong is done to any being ; and all things conspire for the ultimate good of those, who are not wanting to themselves. A sense of sin and unworthiness ought to repress every murmuring thought. However severe may be the chastising rod, who can say that their punishment is equal to their ill desert ? Hence it may be observed,

3. " An afflictive and hazardous situation " should be considered as a loud call to repentance. It is the design and the tendency of afflictions to take away sin. In the glare of prosperity and the security of ease, men are prone to forget their Maker and be insensible to their guilt. But to be impious and impenitent in adversity, is peculiar only to incorrigible depravity. For then we feel our weakness and dependence ; we awake to our true situation ; the understanding enlightened, sees things as they are ; the heart,

heart, softened, is alive to penitential sorrow. True repentance includes reformation and virtuous practice.

4. THEREFORE, evils and dangers, rightly considered, serve to teach and enforce our whole duty; and especially those parts of it, to which recent experience or the exigencies of the times, give a peculiar importance and obligation. So natural is this effect of divine judgments, that the prophet represents it as certain. He affirms that men *will* learn righteousness from seasons of affliction, because, unless lost to reflection, they will then be led to think of God as a moral governor, and of adversity as designed for their trial and improvement; will be sensible that their chief good is to be sought, where only the Creator has placed it, in wisdom and virtue, and not in those worldly gains, pleasures and honors, in which we are liable to disappointment in pursuit, dissatisfaction in enjoyment and uncertainty in possession. The particular branches of duty inculcated by past or present exigencies, have a peculiar claim to be considered and practised. If the evils a people suffer or dread have proceeded in a greater or less degree from irreligion, they are taught to lay an increased stress on religion; from party, they should learn union; from foreign influence, they should learn to watch and oppose the contagion; from undue partiality to any other government, they should learn to cultivate stronger national feelings. Are their difficulties in any measure the consequence of a deceitful sense of security, or an excessive reluctance to give up a less good for a greater? they are warned to be ever awake to their dangers; and are taught to realize that great blessings of a personal or publick nature, are not allowed by the condition of the world, to be acquired or retained without proportioned sacrifices.

Having attempted briefly to show in what consists the right use of publick evils and dangers, we shall proceed,

II. To

II. To apply the subject to the present circumstances of the world, and of our country.

None can doubt that the judgments of God are now in the earth. Perhaps no period in the history of the European world was ever more disastrous and alarming. A revolution in a great nation, which seemed to begin in good principles ; and not only to open a fair prospect of liberty and happiness to itself, but to be the æra of a glorious reformation of civil and ecclesiastical abuses in other countries ; which therefore was watched by Americans with a partial admiration and a warm interest, has proved in its progress, a tremendous scourge to that nation and to a great part of the civilized world. It boasts of being regenerated, because it has exchanged abuses, which had some limits fixed by law and custom, for those which have no bounds ; the vices and follies of superstition, mixed with some true religion for the wild theories of infidelity or the madness of Atheism ; the comparatively mild tyranny of kings and nobles for the ferocious and unrestricted tyranny of democracy. The spirit of proselytism and the lust of domination have marked the conduct of its successive governments to other nations. Faithful to their promise early made, to be a " Committee of insurrection for the world," and disregarding their subsequent explanation of this promise, which disavowed any intention of interfering with the internal government of other countries, or aspiring after conquest ; they have not ceased to attempt, by the propagation of disorganizing principles, the arts of diplomacy and the power of armies, to mould to their standard the opinions and governments, and to subject to their power, the will and strength of all the nations within the reach of their ambition or influence. Under the imposing pretence of giving liberty and protection, they have covered with armies, drained by contributions and desolated by pillage some of the most wealthy and flourishing countries of Europe. The
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physical strength of this populous and corrupt nation is now at the disposal of men, distinguished by an ambition, that knows no bounds; a profligacy, capable of any injustice or cruelty; a boldness of design, equal to projects, the most extravagant; a temerity of execution, that shrinks from no means. With such a spirit reigning, with such scenes acting in a nation, and a part of the world more or less connected with us, by treaties and by commercial intercourse, and to whose views of interest or ambition we must be of some consequence, was it ever reasonable to expect that we should remain unaffected, uninjured? What should save us from a portion of that vial of wrath, which is poured out upon the earth and the sea? With whatever uprightness our foreign relations have been conducted, yet we are not, as a people, so innocent, that we could look for an extraordinary interposition to over-rule natural causes in our favor; to stay the ambition and rapacity of others, to heal divisions among ourselves! It is a distinguished lot, to have so long escaped taking our part in the tragedy of the old world, by means of our remote situation, and of rulers to adopt, and the smiles of heaven to succeed in some degree a neutral policy. Is it not cause of wonder and gratitude, that, notwithstanding division at home, and injury and insult abroad, notwithstanding an opposition, continually enfeebling the arm of government, notwithstanding in many of our citizens a partial admiration of one nation and an inveterate prejudice and animosity against another, notwithstanding all the influence of foreign diplomatic skill and means, this pacific system has been so far maintained, without any deviation from justice, and we trust without any absolute degradation of honor; and our commerce, exposed to almost unceasing depredation, has still poured wealth and prosperity into the lap of our country. But we have reason to fear that neither justice, nor honor, nor interest will permit

us longer to pursue the plan of non-resistance and concession. Accusations the most unfounded, demands the most unreasonable, and indignities the most provoking, could not discourage our government from conforming to its own pacific principles, and to the desire of amity with all nations and especially with the Republic in our alliance, rooted in the hearts of this people, by persisting in its endeavours to settle all real or pretended differences by negotiation. It has been fondly anticipated, as the fruit of these endeavours, that this Republic would not persevere in claiming the right, or feeling the disposition to attack the persons and property of our citizens ; because we were customers to her enemies, because we undertook to adjust our disputes, and settle our intercourse with them, as though we were an independent nation, unmindful of her wishes and claims to interfere in the transaction ; because we declined giving her that ascendancy in our councils which she might think belonged to her ; because we refused to her the sole right of constructing for herself the compacts between the two nations ; and were unwilling to be subservient to her will, and mingle our destinies with the extravagancies, crimes and dangers of her revolutionary situation. But in vain has remonstrance been extended to supplication, and condescension to humility. By refusing even to hear us, she denies us the rights, not only of an ally and a friend, but of a sovereign state ; and by the terms she indirectly offers, which she pretends not to enforce by reason, but power, we learn that we have only to chuse whether we will be tributary to her in a large sum now and in a promise of further aid, when in our power, of which power she will be the judge ; or submit to her ruinous aggressions ; or make vigorous preparations and endeavours for defence. To be obliged to make an election of either measure, is ground for some concern, lest possibly it should not be such an one as is worthy of us ; but if appearances in the great

body of our citizens, and in our national council, remove apprehension, on this head, and indicate a general opinion, that though to chuse measures of defence is unhappy, yet to chuse submission is fatal; still is our situation "hazardous and afflictive." To provide for the protection of our extensive commerce, and security of our coasts and sea ports, must subject the country to no inconsiderable expence; and after all that can be done, great interruptions of our trade will be inevitable, unless the system of depredation shall be discontinued. Should the present breach be widened into complete hostility, we must look for a severe trial of the patriotism and fortitude of our citizens and of the efficiency of our government in the expences and sufferings inseparable from war; tho' the issue of the contest should be as favourable, as our united and persevering efforts attended with the smiles of heaven, can encourage us to hope, and we should never be compelled to bend to the yoke of any nation on earth.

Of this serious nature are the judgments of God abroad in the earth, and inflicted or impending upon our country. Let us hear the voice they utter: let us learn the lessons they teach. In the evils that press, in the dangers that thicken upon the world and our country, let divine Providence be acknowledged, adored and trusted. This Providence, we are assured, converts destructive events into means of good; and, as it employs lightning and inundation to purify the air and fertilize the earth; so it uses atheism, infidelity, ambition and immorality, for the just punishment or the salutary discipline of nations. We see the wisdom and justice of the moral Governor of the world in the invariable tendency of error and corruption to produce calamity, and of calamity to reform those who are capable of reformation; and to destroy the incorrigible. Whether the miseries now let loose upon the nations of the old world, shall in some or all instances operate as a remedial process, and after deluging them for a season be succeeded by

the reign of religion, rational liberty and morals, or whether they shall reduce them back to ignorance and barbarism, the melancholy wreck of what they once were, human sagacity is incompetent to determine.

Whatever may be the issue of these calamitous events, they have an evident relation to moral character. The nation in Europe, which has chiefly mingled the bitter cup, now given to many of the inhabitants of the world, has drank of it herself in some proportion to that licentiousness of principles and manners, which pervaded the several classes and institutions of society, before the revolution; and which this event has increased so as to exhibit an unparelled history of crimes. Though splendid by her victories and conquests, her internal situation contains the sources of further calamities, which render it morally certain that the measure of her punishment is not full. In those countries, which she has been permitted to afflict and scourge, abuses in civil and religious institutions; and corruption of morals had taken deep root. It is a signal Providence, that the church of Rome should find her most formidable enemy in her most devoted children; that the power which first erected, should be the chief agent to attack the papal throne; and that thus the contemners of christianity should undesignedly confirm its truth, and probably aid its prevalence by accomplishing its prophecies and destroying the source of its most shocking corruptions and abuses. From the situation of other nations, let us turn to our own, and we shall see the justice, as well as wisdom of God in the evils we suffer or fear. We need correction; and deserve punishment. For a people so young, enjoying so many advantages and pressed by so many motives to be virtuous, we have made no inconsiderable progress in vice. Beside the personal depravity of each, there are vices which mark our character as a nation. We are more or less chargeable with infidelity, impiety, profaneness, and

a disregard of the divine word and institutions. We must acknowledge the dissoluteness of manners, the unbounded passion for wealth, show and dissipation, too conspicuous among us, the neglect of fairness and a sacred regard to contracts in the dealings of individuals, and even in some transactions of public bodies, the declension of family discipline, the virulent spirit of party, the hatred of good government, the distrust, the abuse, and defamation of great and good men in public office, which have prevailed to the dishonor, criminality and unhappiness of our country.

Let us regard our existing and threatening calamities, as a loud call to repentance. Let us now recollect our sins in their number, aggravation, guilt, and danger; lament and condemn them, and make humble confession of them to God, with resolutions of amendment.

To our repentance be joined our prayers to the Author of good, to forgive our sins, to remove present and avert impending evils, and to guide and animate in their duty, the rulers and the people. Prayer in trouble is the dictate of nature and the command of God; the mean of composing and fortifying the mind, and an appointed method of obtaining blessings. Having sincerely committed our cause to God, we shall be better prepared to assert it with becoming fortitude and yet with moderation, and to support any issue of our fortunes with equanimity.

But presumptuous is a reliance on prayers, unaccompanied by sincere endeavours to know and correct the wrong; to know and practice the right. Let us answer the end of the judgments, with which we are visited, and learn righteousness. "Who are they that will harm you if you be followers of that, which is good?" Armed with an approving conscience and a trust in God, we shall not fear what our enemies threaten or attempt. To this end, let us diligently apply to the discharge of all the duties, which re-

pest God, our neighbours, our country and ourselves. Let us especially attend to those duties, the claim of which to regard, arising from their own fitness and obligation, is recommended and enforced by the peculiar exigencies of the times and the country.

1st. The disasters and perils of the times are calculated to exhibit the worth and importance of our holy religion, and to excite our zeal to study, understand, promote, defend and practise it. Men in Europe, called philosophers, have for many years been co-operating in order to root out the christian religion; and some in this country have lately seemed to befriend their design. Considering christianity in connection with the abuses which had been heaped upon it, they left revelation for the supposed pure religion of nature. Meeting difficulties in the religion of nature, to the solution of which their reason was found insufficient, their next step was Atheism. Many of these persons being at the same time visionary theorists in government, and irritated with the tyranny of the European systems, were possessed with the "insanity of revolution" in church and state; determined that whether or not men would be governed by reason, they still should not be governed by force, and aimed at the subversion of hierarchy, by plucking from the mind all religion. With an apostolic zeal they multiplied and spread books against revelation, under the name of "infamous fanaticism," filled with misrepresentations, and objections, often confuted, but dressed by wit and pointed by satire; for it was well known that ridicule makes hundreds of infidels, where argument makes one; and that it is impossible to "refute a sneer." This infidelity was served up in pamphlets and pocket volumes for the common people, in histories and encyclopedias for the learned. These doctrines, which have turned the world upside down, have lately come hither also. The writings of these votaries of reason, are kindly circulated among

people of all classes, to show them that they have been hood-wink'd and priest-ridden; and that they will consult their happiness and dignity, by exchanging the principles and prospects of a religion, breathing good will to men, and beaming light on the darkness of the grave, for the dreary visions and debasing tenets of unbelief. No method is more effectual to prepare men for political revolutions, which require and produce every kind and degree of crime especially when their object is the subversion of old and corrupt governments. Let men be divested of all sense of accountableness to God, all reverence for an oath, all belief in a future state, and they cease to be troubled with any check from conscience, and are ripe for every enormity.

All ought to suspect the cause of infidelity; when they perceive that its advocates in general are the foes of civil order; that the weapons with which it is defended are misrepresentation, ridicule, falsehood and blasphemy; and that the effect of its triumph must be the dissolution of every moral and social tie.

That our faith may not be shaken by these rude assaults, we ought to study the evidences of our holy religion, with seriousness and candor, remembering that objections of a formidable appearance may be made to any comprehensive system; that facts well attested are before all reasonings; that the smallest over balance of evidence in favour of christianity, requires us to make it the rule of faith and practice; and that the superstition or enthusiasm of the weakest or wildest devotee is less absurd and contemptible, than indifference or levity on the subject of religion. To detach from our creeds human inventions; and conceive of the gospel in its purity, must tend to confirm our own belief, and recommend it to the thinking part of mankind. Practice strengthens faith. To imbibe the spirit and obey the laws of the system, will have a powerful effect to impress its truth, and to

communicate its consolations. Every thing interesting to us as rational, accountable, and immortal creatures is involved in this subject. If revelation be a truth, it is a serious truth, and must have an all important influence upon our condition beyond the grave. Where the belief of it is wanting; the irregular passions are released from all commanding restraints, the motives for cultivating permanent excellencies are withdrawn; affliction is bereft of its consolation, and death of its hope.

Religion is the grand support of morality. The nation in modern times, where the altar has been overthrown, affords an awful and experimental proof of this position; among other instances, in a law of divorce, tending to weaken all the domestic ties and poison virtue and happiness in the fountain; and in excesses and cruelties, over which reason weeps and humanity shudders. To those, who do not believe in the moral government of God, there remains no motive to refrain from vicious gratification, but present interest. Hence arise the importance and necessity of religion to civil society. The law of honor forbids no vice, that is fashionable; the law of the land cannot reach to secret crimes; nor to that numerous class of actions, incapable of being defined. The artful can elude, the rich and powerful can defy it. Since then, as the creatures of God, the expectants of a future state, and the members of civil society, we have such an interest in our religion, let us be taught and warned by the judgment of God in the earth and our land, to study it with zeal, and to practice it with fidelity. Let every one give it all the countenance of his example, by observing its institutions and laws. The unchristian lives of its professed friends do it more injury than the writings of its enemies. But its cause will not be maintained, unless careful attention be paid to the religious education of the young. The impressions of youth, form the character of manhood. "Therefore should we

teach these things diligently to our children, and talk of them, when we sit in the house and walk by the way, when we rise up, and when we lie down."

Our existing and threatening evils instruct and warn us in some of our civil and political duties.

But on this subject the christian minister is told by some of the professed lovers of liberty and the people, that his lips should be sealed. "What have politics say they, to do with religion? Let the preacher tell his hearers of their duty to God, and their duty to their neighbours; but not of their duty to their country, or the government, by which that country is protected."

A reason alledged for thus requiring him to discourse to his hearers on what they owe to the parts, but not on what they owe to the whole, is, that by introducing politics into the pulpit, he occasions offence and uneasiness, to those, whose political sentiments or conduct he condemns. Upon this principle, he ought not to presume to say any thing different from the religious more than the political creeds of any of his auditors; nor reprove vices, which any of them commit; for it is highly probable that they may feel offended and uneasy at such an opposition to their opinions; still more at a condemnation of their moral conduct. But the faithful preacher will keep back nothing he deems profitable; and speak not as pleasing men, but God.

Several considerations have weight with the public teachers, especially in this country, to make them deem it a right, and in some cases a duty to discourse occasionally upon the political situation and interests of the country; and the obligations of rulers and people. These things are acknowledged proper subjects of prayer. Why are they not equally proper subjects of preaching? The examples of the ancient prophets, of the author of our religion and of the apostles carry an injunction to this practice. The apostle Peter denounces a class of men, whose char-

after is, that " they despise government, are presumptuous, self-willed, not afraid to speak evil of dignities, and while they promise liberty, are themselves the servants of corruption.* Religion extends its authority to our conduct towards our country and government, not less than towards our parents, children, or neighbours. We may be honest or dishonest, faithful or unfaithful in our relations to the state, as well as to private connections. Political duties are therefore moral duties. What is politically right is morally right, what is politically wrong, is morally wrong.

Christian ministers and those with whom they are nearly connected have rights of persons, liberty and sometimes property, which the fate of the government and country may deeply affect. From love to themselves and families, as well as from patriotism, they are led to vindicate that administration of national affairs, which they deem connected with public security and happiness; and they do not calculate upon being refused that liberty of speech, established by our constitutions, and eagerly claimed, used and gloried in by other citizens.

The Clergy of this country are led to express their sentiments on her political situation, not only by considering it as a right and a duty, but also by the force of habit. Till within a few years it has been generally represented as a merit in the Clergy to interest themselves in their country's cause; it has been insisted particularly, by some of the warmest leaders in our late revolution, that this order of men ought to throw their weight into the political scale; and are under a moral and religious, as well as civil obligation to warn the people of the dangers, which threaten their liberty and happiness. This way of thinking was so prevalent, and it was such a favorite object with the patriots of the time, to have the Clergy engaged to maintain the principles of the revolution, that the Provincial Congress in the year 1774, ad-

* Dr. Belknap's sermon before the Convention of the Clergy, 1796.

addressed a circular letter to the ministers of the gospel, commending their concern for the temporal as well as spiritual happiness of this people ; their exertions as well in the cause of their country as of religion ; and exhorting them to assist in averting the political evils, with which she was menaced.* Is it extraordinary that these men should continue a practice, so long considered laudable, and not immediately see their error, even if they have committed one ? Are they not excusable, if in a situation of our foreign relations so similar, in the maxims to be asserted and the evils to be resisted, to that, in which they were encouraged to cry aloud and spare not against rapacious demands and arbitrary encroachments, they do not expect to give offence to the friends of liberty and order, by shewing a decent zeal in the cause of their country ? On the supposition that our preaching on subjects of this nature were blameable, the blame comes with an ill grace from its former advocates ; and justifies an opinion that we should hear nothing of the charge of going out of our sphere, being tools of a party and contravening the spirit of our office, if we could bring ourselves to deserve it, by delivering other sentiments than our own.

Among the duties belonging to us, as the people of a common country, and enforced by the exigencies of the times, none is more important than union. The spirit of party, which is the consequence of freedom, and which under proper control might do good, is ever tending to a ruinous excess. Since it embitters

* Provincial Congress, Dec. 6, 1774. It was resolved that the following letter be addressed to the several ministers of the gospel throughout this province.

Rev. Sir, We cannot but acknowledge the goodness of heaven in constantly supplying us with Ministers of the gospel, whose concern has been the temporal and spiritual happiness of this people. In a day like this, when all the friends of civil and religious freedom are exerting themselves to deliver this country from its present calamities, we cannot but place great hopes in an order of men, who have ever distinguished themselves in their country's cause, and do therefore recommend to the ministers of the gospel in the several towns and other places in this colony, that they assist in avoiding that dreadful slavery, with which we are threatened.

Gordon's History Amer. Rev. vol. I.

private intercourse and even discourages good neighbourhood, since it impedes the operations of government and invites foreign interference, it ought always to be suppressed and resisted. Our present situation reads a solemn lesson upon its folly and danger. Had not appearances among us encouraged the foreign power, with which we are at variance to calculate upon our disunion, we have reason to think her policy, would have deterred her from the extremity of injury and imposition, to which she has proceeded. Union is now inculcated by a sense of common danger. When our essential rights are invaded; it is no time to dispute; all party should be lost in public spirit. It is a strong motive to agreement, that it will disappoint the expectations of those, who have relied on our divisions to aid their ambitious and rapacious views, and thus induce them to be reconciled on equitable terms, unless they wish to come to an open rupture. All reasonable pretences for any great diversity of opinion on the present state of our dispute with the French Republic are removed, by a complete disclosure of the ambition and profligacy of her government; and a clear exhibition of the wisdom, moderation and integrity of our own. The mask is dropped off and all can now see what we are to make of those flattering pretences, bold assertions, and peremptory claims, which she has so successfully played off upon the misinformation, the credulity, and the mistaken gratitude of Americans. It will be no small alleviation of the mortification and injury of her ill-treatment, if it heal our divisions, and if it cure us of that dangerous malady, foreign partiality. After what has happened, it is believed that the greatest part of those who have advocated her claims in opposition to the government of their country, will think, that the honor of their heads and hearts requires them not to persist in her vindication; and that every one will be ready to embrace the adversary of his opinions.

Let us manifest our union, and practise another lesson which the exigencies of our times and country seriously inculcate by a hearty approbation and support of our government. Let us submit to all the laws without distinction; sensible that our obligation to obedience is not affected by the question, whether in particular instances, they be good or bad. Let us confide in the men, to whom are committed the affairs of government; since in general they have better means and not weaker motives to do right than the people at large. Do any persons ever profess love to the constitution, and yet revile all the leading measures of its administration? do they attempt to introduce alterations into the form, essentially changing the distribution of its powers, or upon the failure of this scheme, foment a jealousy between co-ordinate powers, exciting one branch to usurp upon another? They should be watched and opposed. The hatred of the government will be associated with the hatred of its measures. Have we tried so full an experiment upon our constitution, as to see reason for making radical changes; or putting any important parts of its structure to hazard, in this period of disorganization and ferment? The rigid preservation of the respective powers of the constitution in the several departments is the preservation of the fences, which its framers builded around the liberties of the people. May we never again give a shadow of pretence, to a foreign power, for the insolent and mortifying assertion, that she has a party in this country, more devoted to her than to its own government; a party which she has skill and means to manage at her will. Such parties, such skill and means in their own bosom have given into her hands those countries, which she has either annexed to herself, or reduced to more than colonial dependence, or sold in her treaties of peace. It is firmly believed she will be convinced that she has mistaken the sentiments and character of this people; and will find a very insignificant number, who will hesitate, when called, to chuse

between subserviency to her will and dependence on her fortunes, and the honor and safety of their country. The declarations of the people and the measures of the government are proclaiming to her and to the world, that however desirous of escaping a contest, we are not prepared to surrender the right of governing ourselves without a "manly struggle."

Some of us have heretofore indulged the dream, that this country might enjoy a perpetual peace. But it was always reasonable to expect that the common wars of Europe would expose us to the injustice and violence of the belligerent nations; and that to redress and prevent injuries, the failure of negotiation would require the application of force. It is one of the divine judgments upon mankind, that nations, christian and civilized, are commonly disposed to appeal to arms for settling disputes, which ought to be compromised by negotiation, or decided by an acknowledged tribunal. The impossibility of any defenceless nation maintaining its rights, is more apparent than ever, since the erection of a revolutionary government, whose object is the empire, whose means, the pillage of the world. Shall this country receive or spurn her yoke? Shall it submit to injuries, which it can neither get redressed nor discontinued, but on terms equally disgraceful and ruinous; or shall it prepare for defence, and make a resolute stand? The christian, the patriot, and the politician answer alike, that no further concession on our part remains to be made; that the sense of our wrongs, and the determination to repel them, which are manifested by the people and the government, are wise just and noble. Resistance to future aggressions is due to our honor, which is as well the interest as pride of every nation, since patience of persevering contempt invites injury; and it is due to our interest, which can never be promoted, by bribing foreign nations to insult and plunder us, by surrendering to them the profits of our commerce and emptying our coffers into their laps; which represents, as absurd and fool-

ish, the project of compounding with insatiable avarice and boundless ambition ; which teaches that seasonable disbursements, in preparing for war, are more promising means of peace, than paying a tribute. It is due to the rights of nations through the world, which are menaced with annihilation, from the colossal tyranny of this Republic ; and to the millions, who are oppressed by the iron hand of her power. It is due to those "principles, for which this country has contended at every sacrifice," to those patriots and heroes, whose councils, labors, and blood dearly purchased our independence ; to those resources for defence in our numbers, skill and courage, in our wealth and situation, with which we are favored by Providence. It is due to the justice of our cause ; and to the reverence and gratitude we owe Almighty God, who hath distinguished our lot, by a profusion of natural, civil, and religious blessings, that we may be to the world an example of a nation at once prosperous, virtuous and free.

Confecrating to his service our affections and actions, let us commit to his protection our national safety and happiness. May he guide our public councils and bless the labor of our hands. May he dispose the contemnners of our rights to justice and peace, avert threatened calamities, or prepare us to meet them, and to learn wisdom by all, which we may be called to suffer. To him be glory forever,

AMEN.

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